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and Veterans Affairs*

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By Candis Olmstead

Joint Force Headquarters, Alaska National Guard

Alaska Army Guardsmen provide aerial search for missing snowmachiner

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Soldiers with the Alaska Army National Guard's 207th Aviation Battalion have provided aerial assistance for the past two days to help in the search for an overdue snowmachiner on his way from Eek to Quinhagak.

According to the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center, the individual departed on snow machine shortly after 7 p.m. Saturday, March 23, headed south for the approximately 30-mile trek.

The Alaska State Troopers contacted the RCC Sunday to request aviation support to assist with a ground search that was already underway. Several search and rescue community volunteers formed search parties and explored the routes between both villages on snowmachine, said Capt. Andrew Adams, the Black Hawk pilot on today's mission and commander of the Army Aviation Operating Facility in Bethel.

"We flew about four hours each, yesterday and today," said Adams. "We flew all throughout the coastal trail area and the inland route," he said.

Adams said the weather hasn't been a limiting factor, as it was overcast, but visibility was unrestricted. The terrain is tundra, relatively flat and not mountainous, with most of the snow melted and rivers and lakes thawed or thawing.

"Most trails aren't even snow covered, so it doesn't really leave a trail to follow," said Adams. "It's really hard to decipher whether tracks are fresh or not, and we don't have the advantage of a clearly defined trail, which occurs when the ground is covered in snow," he said.

Adams said that the missing snowmachiner was reported to have been wearing camouflaged rain gear and traveling on a blue snowmachine.

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Alaska Army National Guard Spc. Jeffery Hartmann and Staff Sgt. Joseph Sallafie, join Alaska State Trooper Scott Corino in approaching a local volunteer search group on the tundra between Eek and Quinhagak, Alaska, during their effort to find an overdue snowmachiner, March 25, 2019. The missing man left Eek Saturday, March 23 shortly after 7 p.m. for a 30-mile trip, and has not yet been found. (Courtesy photo)



Alaska Army National Guardsmen assist the Alaska State Troopers and community volunteers during their effort to find an overdue snowmachiner, March 25, 2019. The missing man departed Eek, Alaska, Saturday, March 23 shortly after 7 p.m. for a 30-mile trek to the neighboring village of Quinhagak. The Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, assigned to the Bethel Army Aviation Operating Facility, landed on the tundra during the search to check the shed for occupants. (Courtesy photo)



Alaska Army National Guard Spc. Jeffery Hartmann and Staff Sgt. Joseph Sallafie, join Alaska State Trooper Scott Corino and a local volunteer search group on the tundra between Eek and Quinhagak, Alaska, during their effort to find an overdue snowmachiner, March 25, 2019. The missing man left Eek Saturday, March 23 shortly after 7 p.m. for a 30-mile trip, and has not yet been found. (Courtesy photo)